(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Government has reiterated that all bilateral issues between India and Pakistan are to be discussed between the two countries and that there is no role for third party intervention regarding Jammu & Kashmir.

US and China have issued a Joint Statement on South Asia. Government conveyed its reaction to the Joint Statement in the Statement of Official Spokesman issued on 27.06.1998, which categorically rejects this approach as completely unacceptable.

Transit routes through Bangladesh to North-Eastern States

2492. SHRI KHAGEN DAS: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a long pending demand for a transit route for passenger and trade through Bangladesh in Tripura and other parts of North-East;

(b) if so, what steps have been taken by Government to get the transit route opened;

(c) whether Government have taken up the matter with the Government of Bangladesh for a passage to Chittagong port; and

(d) the reaction of Government of Bangladesh to this proposal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) India has a limited transit facilaity through Bangladesh under the provisions of the India-Bangladesh Waterways Transit & Trade Protocol (IWT & TP) which has been in operation since 1972. However, Government have made repeated proposals to the Government of Bangladesh for overland transit facilities for passenger and freight traffic. Bangladesh has not agreed to these proposals.

Pak Response to the resolution adopted at P-5 meeting

2493. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the Pakistan's response to the resolution adopted at the P-5 meeting at Geneva held in first week of June 1998 to the effect that this marked the beginning of international involvement in the Indian sub Continent and that bilsteral on issues like Kashmir needed to be supplemented by a broader multilateral process to promote durable peace in South Asia; and

(b) if so, what is Government's response to the Pak-reaction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) Government have seen Pakistan's response to the joint communiaqe issued at the conclusion of the P-5 Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in Geneva on 4 June, 1998.

(b) There is no place for any international or third party involvement of any kind whatsoever in bilateral issues between India and Pakistan. This view has been reiterated through official statements, as also in interaction with all concerned at the political and diplomatic levels. India remains firmly committed to carrying forward the process of bilateral dialogue with Pakistan to settle all outstanding issues.

Visit of High Level Team from Oman

2494. SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether any high level team from Oman had visited India recently;
(b) if so, the prime objectives of their visit;

(c) the names of the Government departments with which they held meetings during their visit; and

(d) whether they had also met the officials of the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers; if so, the prime objectives thereof and the bilateral issues discussed in the meeting?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) Yes, Sir. The Minister of Trade and Industry of Oman visited India between 30 April—2 May, 1998.

(b) The prime objective of the visit of the Omani Minister was to inaugurate the "OMAN WEEK" which was held in New Delhi from May 1—6, 1998.

(c) and (d) The visiting dignitary had meetings with the Ministers of Petroleum, Commerce and Chemicals & Fertilisers, and the Minister of State for External Affairs during which bilateral relations in the political, economic and cultural fields were discussed.

G-8 Countries' Reaction to Nuclear Test

2495. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the salient features of G-8 countries' reaction to India in the post blast aftermath; and

(b) the response to Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) Foreign Minister of the G-8 countries held a special meeting in London on June 12, 1998 to "consider the serious global challenge posed by the nuclear tests carried out by India and Pakistan". In a Communique issued at the end of their meeting, the G-8 Foreign Ministers said that the tests had "affected both countries' relationship with each of us, worsened rather than improve their security environment, damaged their prospects of achieving their goals of sustainable economic development, and run countrary to global efforts towards nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament". They called on India (and Pakistan) to stop further nuclear tests, adhere to the CTBT immediately and unconditionally thereby facilitating its early entry into force", refrain from weaponisation or deployment of nuclear weapons, participate in negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty in the Conference on Disarmament "with a view to reaching early agreement" and refrain from exporting nuclear and missiles technology. They also called on both countries to take steps to reduce tensions in the subcontinent through dialogue and peaceful means. The G-8 Foreign Ministers said that the recent nuclear tests would not confer nuclear weapon status on India and Pakistan under the NPT.

(b) Government considers the G-8 Foreign ministers Communique as unfortunate, as their statement ignored the several positive gestures made by Government in the aftermath of the nuclear tests. These include, inter-alia, the institution of a moratorium on nuclear testing, our willingness to explore ways and means for de jure formalisation of this undertaking, our readiness to engage in negotiations on and FMCT in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, and our willingness to maintain and further develop strict export controls on nuclear related materials and technology. Government have consistently made known India's continued commitment to developing a framework of peaceful relations with Pakistan through a broadbased and sustained bilateral dialogue. Government have also reiterated India's commitment to embark on a well-considered, comprehensive and purposeful programme meant to futher genuine non-proliferation and global nuclear disarmament. Government have called on the G-8 countries to reflect seriously on the proposals made by India rather than attempt